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THE DISFRANCHISEMENT OF DELAWARE.

A TESTIMONIAL OF THANKS.

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE, *December 17, 1885.*

ALLEN THORNDIKE RICE, Esq.,

Editor of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW:

DEAR SIR: As citizens of Delaware, subject to her institutions and identified with her interests, we wish to thank you for the stand you have recently taken in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, in your article entitled "A Disfranchised People." That brief but effective monograph is bringing to the knowledge and criticism of the whole country a condition of public affairs in this State unique in their iniquity, and necessarily inflicting upon our people the charge that "partisan cunning, injustice and dishonesty have here reached their lowest ebb in American public life." These are your own words, and they are true.

It is futile to attempt to dispute the facts, or to hide the point at issue. We are indignant that even the small band of ex-Republicans, represented by the New York "Evening Post," should add insult to injury, in our case, by sneering at our grievances, and seeking to belittle a most important exposure of political crime.

But we do not find, in your conduct of this discussion, any partisan motive or bias. You have simply described the political abominations existing in this State, which have practically nullified the principles and purposes of our Constitution itself; and your elucidation of the matter has been so calm, clear, and connected, that, to a thoughtful reader, it carries conviction on its face. You have rigidly and truthfully summarized the political wrong which exists among us when you say that a large part of the citizens of Delaware "are as thoroughly disfranchised by legal chicanery as any community of negroes in Mississippi were ever disfranchised by physical intimidation." Our disfranchised citizens do not happen to be altogether the blacks; they are simply

the *poor*. At present they belong chiefly to one political party—the Republican; but, as thousands of Democrats in Delaware are also poor, the disfranchised might easily belong to the Democratic party if the tables should be turned, and the same dangerous laws and unscrupulous methods should be continued. This question, in fact, rises far above all mere partisan controversy, and is thus a proper subject for the strenuous but impartial treatment of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

It is unnecessary for us to reiterate the main and evident facts exposed in your article. Here permit us to give special emphasis to one point: Those who misunderstand us, and those who misrepresent us, prate of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with the implication that we complain of laws similar to theirs, which require voters to pay a tax. Whatever any of us may regard as the “ethics of actual democracy” on this point, we have made no complaint, in connection with present outrages upon us, against the poll-tax of Delaware, or against any other tax that the people, as a whole, consider necessary. Our complaint is, that during the past twelve years the tax-laws of our State have been so distorted—warped from their original and honest purpose for partisan ends—that one political party disfranchises at will a sufficient number of its opponents to reduce the exercise of the great right of suffrage almost to a farce. Our difficulty is, not that we have a tax to pay in order to vote, but that we live under laws which prevent citizens from qualifying to vote by paying their taxes, and which thus defraud us of our rights, and defraud the public of its legitimate revenues. This crying abuse, this inexcusable shame, which is well understood and generally acknowledged in our State, you have been able to bring to the attention of the nation. You have done an excellent work. Again we thank you for it. If you should continue it you would still find much to do.

Very truly yours,

GEO. W. BUSH,

EDWARD BETTS,

GEO. G. LOBDELL,

HENRY DU PONT,

ANTHONY HIGGINS,

EDWARD G. BRADFORD,

W. HASTINGS,

GEO. W. STONE,

HENRY C. MCLEAR,

H. MENDINHALL,

THOMAS S. BELLAH,

WATSON R. SPERRY,

E. T. WARNER.

ALFRED D. WARNER,

WASHINGTON JONES,

J. H. ADAMS,

H. B. SEIDEL,

H. C. JONES,

WILLIAM CANBY,

JOHN G. BAKER,

DANIEL J. LAYTON,

WILLIAM G. PENNYPACKER,

JOB H. JACKSON,

JAMES SCOTT.